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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA-GEORGIA: GENEVA PROCESS, PEREVI;
NAGORNO-KARABAKH

REF: MOSCOW 3303

Classified By: A/DCM Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a November 13 meeting, MFA fourth CIS directorate chief Andrey Kelin described the procedural difficulties EU Special Representative Morel faced in lining up the November 18 Geneva process talks. Russia's primary goal for the talks was to launch security discussions focused on the buildup of Georgian forces near South Ossetia. Kelin insisted a credible observer regime in Georgia proper had to be established before it would be possible to discuss similar "transparency" inside South Ossetia. On Perevi, Kelin said Russian troops had been stationed in the South Ossetian town of (Lesser) Perevi, as opposed to the neighboring town of Perevi in Georgia proper. Similarly, Kelin rejected demands that Russian troops withdraw from Akhalkgori. Kelin predicted "50 agreements" would be negotiated with each breakaway republic following the Federation Council's November 12 ratification of the friendship treaties. On Nagorno-Karabakh, Kelin said differences had been narrowed, but no date set for the next ministerial level consultations.
End Summary.

Geneva Process

Format

12. (C) MFA fourth CIS directorate chief Andrey Kelin told us November 13 that the prospects for the November 18 Geneva talks were slim, as the parties were still hung up over procedural issues, despite EU Special Representative Pierre Morel's shuttle diplomacy between Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, and Sukhumi. He accused Georgia of behaving "as if nothing had happened" by demanding to include the heads of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian "exile governments" on its delegation, while considering the representatives from the de facto governments of the breakaway regions as members of the Russian delegation. According to Kelin, Morel's shuttle diplomacy last week was bedeviled by two issues. The first was Morel's decision to start the November 18 talks where the October 15 ones had left off, namely with working group meetings, instead of a plenary. Kelin noted that Abkhaz "foreign minister" Sergey Shamba had insisted that all delegations participate "on equal footing." The second issue was Tskhinvali's refusal to allow Morel to arrive directly from Tbilisi instead of via Vladikavkaz. Kelin said Tskhinvali had relented on the latter point November 12, following GOR pressure, and now also agreed to Morel's format proposal, as long as the Georgian delegation did not include such figures as Dmitry Sanakoyev or Alan Parastayev. Choosing Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria as head of the Georgian delegation was also unhelpful, Kelin charged. While Russia was "not fixated on details" of the Geneva meeting, Kelin said the GOR wanted progress in the working groups on

security issues and IDP return. Bokeria, who is not trusted by the Russians and is "despised" even by the Georgian elite, was not a figure capable of delivering results.

Georgian Rearmament

13. (C) When asked about Russia's end-of-year timeline for the Geneva talks, Kelin said Russia's goal for the Geneva process was to stop the creeping buildup of Georgian forces in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia, and, to a lesser extent, Abkhazia. Instead of 11 Georgian police posts, Kelin said Russian intelligence showed there were 24 posts bordering South Ossetia, 10 of which were maintained by Georgia's Ministry of Interior (MOI), 14 by the Ministry of Defense (MOD). Kelin maintained that heavy weapons, including Grad multiple-launch rocket systems, were being moved into Gori. He called on the EU observers to monitor those developments. Kelin compared the buildup to the situation pre-August conflict, and criticized that there were no limits for troop numbers, or manned and unmanned flights over the territories. Russia was receiving signals that Georgian president Saakashvili was planning to seize lost territories. We noted that the Georgian troops hardly constituted a threat to Russian forces and reaffirmed Georgia's sovereign right to self-defense.

OSCE and EUMM Access

14. (C) Kelin said that EU observers would meet with the Russian deputy commander of troops November 17, to discuss

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continued sniper fire from Georgia, which demonstrated the need for a "special investigative mechanism." When pressed that international monitors constituted such a mechanism and Russia should grant them access to South Ossetian territory, Kelin responded that a working observation regime in Georgia proper had to be established before it would be possible to discuss "transparency" in South Ossetia. Kelin insisted South Ossetia was not blocking the return of eight OSCE monitors, only demanding that the monitors be different from those who allegedly "did nothing to prevent the August conflict." (Noting the recent article citing OSCE observers suggesting that Georgia precipitated the conflict on August 7, Kelin sniped, "it must be true, it was in the New York Times.") Kelin suggested that the issues of violence in Perevi, Akhalkgori, and elsewhere were logically to be discussed in Geneva.

Perevi

15. (C) In response to our strong concern over Russian facilitation of South Ossetian forces into Perevi, Kelin pulled out a map of South Ossetia drawn by A. A. Tsutsiyev in 2007 (available in Kavkazkiy Sbornik), which showed that one town called Perevi lay outside of South Ossetia in Georgia proper, while the neighboring village to the south, also called (Lesser) Perevi, was located within South Ossetian territory. Kelin claimed that South Ossetian "special presidential envoy" Chochiyev had provided Morel with census data from 1989 showing that the two towns bearing the name of Perevi were distinct. Russian troops had been stationed in Lesser Perevi, Kelin said, but had moved to Sinagur, in order to avoid the controversy of allegedly being outside of South Ossetia. Sinagur still afforded Russian troops control over the only access road to Lesser Perevi, which at one point moves through Georgia proper and therefore allows Georgia to cut off South Ossetia's access to Lesser Perevi. Kelin said no decision had been made yet to move 30 Russian troops back to Lesser Perevi, as the Foreign Minister had told U/S Burns November 12 (reftel). We stressed that the EUMM and OSCE took issue with Russian geographical claims, and reinforced

Russian responsibility for the actions of its South Ossetian clients.

Akhalgori

¶16. (C) On Akhalgori, Kelin again referred to the map to demonstrate that the city lay in South Ossetian territory, and noted that this had been the case since South Ossetia joined Georgia as an autonomous republic in 1922, except for a brief period under former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Russian troops had no plans to withdraw from Akhalgori, Kelin said, especially as Russia wanted to ward off any Georgian incursion from the road through that town.

Next steps

¶17. (C) After the Russian Federation Council on November 12 ratified the September 17 treaties on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance between Russia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Kelin noted Medvedev needed to sign the treaties, after which "about 50 agreements" would be concluded on military cooperation, the guarding of borders, dual citizenship, free trade, and other economic, cultural, and social issues. Newly appointed Russian ambassadors were already operating out of the MFA, and would depart to their posts before the end of the year.

Nagorno-Karabakh

¶18. (C) Kelin was upbeat on the November 2 summit on Nagorno-Karabakh, saying it gave a signal that a deal was possible. Despite the "protocol glitch" that the presidents "forgot" to brief the Minsk Group co-chairs, progress was made in narrowing differences over the Basic Principles, with the most daunting challenge remaining how to sell a deal to the two publics. Both sides agreed that each step should be guaranteed (possibly by the U.S., Russia, France, and the Security Council), on the Lachin corridor, as well as the status of Karabakh. Apart from a visit by the mediators to the region next week, Kelin said Russia had no dates yet for calling a meeting of the Foreign Ministers.

BEYRLE